THE NEWS LETTER

OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

II SCHENECTADY, N. Y., DECEMBER, 1940 No. 8

OCT 1 1947
PERIODICAL DEPT.

Unprogressiveness rogressive cation

peaker has just addressed our eachers about the language He was persuasive, only gent- ric concerning the benighted full of enthusiasm for what led a new gospel of education, with the devotion of a cru-

of which was to the good, it was scarcely new. All h teachers worth their salt— f us even who may not be— elieved and practiced the be- at education must be dyna- hat the student must read oks he individually needs to hat unless he is stirred by a t is only ashes in his mouth out as nourishing. That idea ack at least as far as Dr. n. Not what was said raises so much as the meagreness conceptions of what litera- s for, and its blindness to dent's and his teacher's op- ities.

arently the speaker had in o encourage little more than when I was teaching in sec- schools was called outside g. Important as that is, such ram limits literature to being a leisure time activity, a of escape (our speaker in- pecifically said as much). rature does offer a means of but it offers more than that, is our business as teachers rature to keep on insisting . Literature gives more even he vicarious experience re- ublications have emphasized. tself experience. At its best s, reveals, even inspires. But re which does this usually ds effort, and because of ay at first repel. This is the teacher can do his best by guiding, inciting, even in- . A young student's desires ited; his needs are great. If ion is to do its job it must his desires include his needs, mit its services to his unin- l demands.

of these needs is that he get h with the past, that he be- t home in his cultural heri- As the inscription by George over our University of Colo- brary says, "Who knows only n generation remains always l." To help the student feel l this need has in the past ne of the principal aims of ion. The "new" education to ignore this service. Of that makes its task easier, o less necessary. Here are hes of the past and present; are the students. And be- them stands the teacher who, a chance, can reveal these to those students; only a

(Continued on page 3)

College English Association

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ANNUAL MEETING, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

December 26, 27, 28, 1940

The Program Committee: Carl J. Weber (Colby College), Chairman; Cleanth Brooks, Jr. (Louisiana); Norman Foerster (Iowa); J. Homer Caskey (Ohio University); Elizabeth W. Manwaring (Wellesley); Miriam R. Small (Wells College).

The Local Committee: Robert M. Gay (Simmons College), Chairman; Harold W. Melvin (Northeastern University); Winslow H. Loveland (Boston University); Donald T. Brodine (Tufts College).

PROGRAM

Thursday, 10:30 a. m. Georgian Room, Statler

"THE ENGLISH MAJOR."

1. "A History of the Language in the English 'Major':" Dorothy Bethurun, (Connecticut College).

2. Discussion.

3. "The Princeton Tutorial System in English": Robert Cawley (Princeton University).

4. Discussion.

2-4 p. m. Jacob Sleeper Hall, Boston University.

CRITICISM AND THE TEACHING OF UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH.

1. "Criticism and the Drama: *Doctor Faustus:*" Arthur Mizener (Wells College).

2. Discussion.

3. "Criticism and Fiction: Hemingway's *The Killers:*" Robert Penn Warren (Louisiana State University).

4. Discussion.

Saturday, 2-4 p.m. Hotel Vendome

WHAT CAN TEACHERS OF ENGLISH DO TO HELP PRESERVE THE DEMOCRATIC TRADITION IN AMERICA?

1. "What shall we include in the fundamental courses in Literature?": Lenthiel H. Downs (Presbyterian College, Clinton, So. Carolina).

2. Discussion.

3. "What values shall we emphasize? How shall we make them clear and significant?" R. A. Jelliffe (Oberlin College).

4. Discussion.

7:30 p. m. Salle Moderne, Statler

ENGLISH COMPOSITION: REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE WORK.

1. "A Philosophy for Required Freshman English": Theodore Morrison (Harvard College).

2. Discussion.

3. "The Vocational 'Liberal Art' ": Edith C. Johnson (Wellesley College).

4. Discussion.

ANNUAL DINNER, SATURDAY, 1 p. m., HOTEL VENDOME preceded by brief business meeting for election of officers, 12:30.

Informal address by President DeVane; Secretary pro tem Burges Johnson presiding. During and after the dinner there will be singing of authentic early Vermont ballads by Mr. Elmer George and "Grannie" Fish and playing of old Vermont fiddle tunes by Mr. Will Ayr, under the direction of Helen Hartness Flanders, Springfield, Vermont.

(Any college English teachers, whether or not members of CEA, are invited. Price per plate $1.50. Please make reservations in advance at CEA desk in Hotel Statler.)

The Teacher As An Artist

We hear much in recent days about the science of education, which seeks to gather up and systematize all that has been said and done in the field of educational endeavor and out of this accumulated knowledge and experience attempts to formulate broad principles of pedagogical procedure. Though such study and investigation has done much to change the profession of teaching from a kind of hit-or-miss method to a process in which the teacher has or should have a fairly clear conception of the objects in view, as often happens, the pendulum in many cases has swept too far, and not a few teachers have deluded themselves in the belief that there is a formula which may be learned early in the process, and which, once learned, may readily be applied to all cases that may arise. We may, however, learn out of textbooks the theory of swimming, and yet sink to the bottom the moment we enter the water.

Teaching is far more of an art than a science. Science is concerned with theoretic truth; art with methods of effecting certain results. Art implies skill in doing anything as a result of knowledge and practice. In this sense art is reduced to a practical basis. But we can go further and say that art is the application of skill and taste to production according to aesthetic principles. And to this we can add that it is the application of skill to the representation of beauty by imitation or design. Here we get into the realm of what we call the fine arts. And I believe that teaching, almost as much as painting or music, is a fine art, in which to attain anything like a full measure of success the teacher must develop within himself all the qualities of an artist, interpreting in the classroom his chosen subject through his feelings, his speech, his conduct, his lofty ideals of life, just as the painter puts his ideals on the canvas and the musician expresses his in concord of sweet sounds. The true teacher lives in his subject and indelibly, often unconsciously, impresses it on his students not so much by precept as by example. The ends of teaching, then, are intellectual, aesthetic, and ethical. "Colleges," said Emerson, "can only highly serve when they aim not to drill but to create; when they gather from far every ray of various genius to their hospitable halls and by the concentrated fires, set the hearts of their youth on flame." Is not, then, the ideal of the teacher close akin to that of the artist, poet, and prophet?

John M. McBryde,
Tulane University.

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COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

Established 1939

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Burges Johnson, Union College	(1942)
Clifford P. Lyons, U. of Florida	(1941)
C. May Overton, South Dakota State	(1941)
Rev. Hugh McCarron, Loyola	(1941)
Norman Foerster, U. of Iowa	(1940)
Frank P. Rand, Massachusetts State	(1940)
Herbert L. Creek, Purdue	(1940)

The Goddess of Wisdom among the ancients was ever a lady of fair countenance graciously garbed.

Must the fruit of scholarship be of necessity unpleasing to the palate and heavy to digest?

—Old proverbs.

Editorial

Undergraduate work in any field of study, whatever the subject-matter, should assure to the student some gains in reasoning power and some increment of special knowledge. But there is something else, too little recognised and too little sought, which should result from any disciplined program of study, and that is the acquirement of a *technique of accomplishment.*

That there is such a technique every practitioner in any art or craft well knows; and it is quite distinct from any other attainment. The plumber or the preacher or the poet may master every necessary technique of his craft but that,—and always suffer from the lack of it.

This is especially true in the case of the writer. Whether the task that faces him is the writing of an essay or an "ad" or an academic thesis, though he be master of his subject-matter and a thousand tricks of expression, if he has not acquired some of the technique of accomplishment he is a creature to be pitied. At least a quarter of his time and effort will be wasted commencing to get ready to begin to get started, and another quarter wasted because he does not know how to stop.

In our "composition" classrooms we might profitably devote much time and invent many novel devices to help students acquire this technique. But then that old question thrusts itself at us with a new insistence,— Is it possible for a teacher to teach something which he himself has never mastered?

Eleven issues of The *News Letter* have appeared since its establishment in 1939. In this issue are printed the names of all who have contributed items or longer articles to its columns during that time, as evidence that our modest periodical is starting out well in the performance of the task for which it was designed. This accomplishment is not editorial but contributorial! Your editor spreads in these columns whatever comes to hand, exercising his authority only in trying to avoid that which has been termed "an unprofitable elaboration of the obvious." Your *News Letter* will increase in value and interest as the wide-flung membership increasingly acquires the habit of sending it items of pertinent news, controversial comments and stimulating suggestions to fellow teachers.

It is proper, in this final issue of the year, to thank the little group of publishers who have so consistently supported our paper by their purchases of advertising space. If their testimonial letters are more than mere courtesy, we may believe that the advertising has been more than ordinarily effective. The *News Letter* will continue throughout the coming year to limit the amount of advertising and confine it to announcements having definite news interest to our readers.

Literary Scholarship

The aims of advanced discipline in letters to which serious attention has been given in the established system of doctoral study are so familiar that they may be stated in few words:

1. To inculcate the scientific habits of accuracy and thoroughness and the sense of time or historical sense.

2. To assure a general acquaintance with a language and a literature viewed in their historical development and environment.

3. To develop a capacity of research in a limited field of language or literary history.

These aims are simple, definite, and attainable. They have produced results which have given American scholarship high distinction within narrow limits. Reflecting what was felt to be, in the nineteenth century, a new need in the history of scholarship, the established system has succeeded in making its contribution. Few would deny that whatever is essential in this contribution should be and will be preserved hereafter. Perhaps few would deny also, that today a new need in the history of scholarship has again arisen, the need of a scholarship more closely affiliated with the creative and critical interests of letters, and more concerned with the values which the humanities have to offer a world threatened with a barbarism expertly scientific in war and peace.

Agreed? If so, I think that college English teachers could render a real service by offering constructive proposals for readers of the *News Letter* to reflect upon.

Norman Foerster,
State Univ. of Iowa.

Notice

Membership in CEA is open to any English teacher of undergraduate courses in a recognized four-year college or university,— or to anyone who has so taught. Qualified persons in order to enroll need only send the annual dues of $2.00 to the Treasurer.

Future Procedure of CEA

President DeVane has submitted by mail the following proposal to CEA directors for discussion.

1. That the organization of the Association be regional, and most of its important work as a group interested in teaching be conducted in regional meetings. Each region should have a chairman, and a secretary elected yearly.

2. That the regional associations nominate two representatives to attend an annual meeting of the national group of CEA, and form a kind of senate with the Directors of the CEA.

3. That the annual meeting of the CEA be held at the same time and place as the MLA, and as nearly as possible in conjunction with the MLA. At the annual meeting of the CEA, there should be three separate meetings, conflicting as little as possible with MLA meetings. These should be: (1) A policy making meeting by the Senate of the CEA; (2) A business meeting of the attending membership of the CEA in which policies are confirmed or rejected, and officers for the ensuing years are elected; and (3) a meeting at which general trends in teaching are discussed, perhaps with a single paper, or not more than two, with discussions of the papers. One or two of these meetings may take place at luncheons, and the third meeting mentioned above may be held in conjunction with the annual banquet.

4. That those members of the CEA whose interest is keen in matters of literary criticism be encouraged, without in any way impairing their membership in the CEA, to petition the MLA to allow them to form a Critical Section of the MLA with the full rights and responsibilities of a section of that body.

5. That the CEA continue to publish a *News Letter*, distributed to its members throughout the nation, as a method of spreading information and discussing the problems the Association is chiefly interested in, and that the *News Letter* be edited by the Secretary of the Association as heretofore, and that the publication be supported by the dues of the total membership throughout the nation.

William C. DeVane.

I have just received Mr. DeVane's letter and have carefully read his proposal to the directors of CEA. It seems to me that his suggestions are sane and constructive. They have my heartiest approval.

With respect to point one of the proposal, I am wondering if it will be possible to have a regional association in every area. We have in this region a very active South Atlantic Modern Language Association, the English section of which is very vigorous. Whether or not it would be desirable to superimpose the CEA upon this already active group is somewhat of a question in my mind.

Clifford P. Lyons

This seems excellent to me, although I haven't had time to ponder upon it much.

R. M. Gay

I have received the propo which Dean DeVane sent to directors of the CEA together w his request that I express an op ion upon it to you. On the wh it seems to me an excellent pl In particular I think the time ripe for the action suggested item 4—the adoption of a Criti Section of the MLA. I assume t there will be discussion of all points made by DeVane, but wi out having the benefit of any discussion I think they are go

Norman Foers

I heartily approve of Profes DeVane's suggestions and agr that it should be published by Directors.

Hugh McCarron, S.

I wish to express my appro of the proposal suggested by D Vane for the College English As ciation. This approval does mean of course that some of t points do not need discussion clarification.

H. L. Cr

I send you my approval. The su gestions are good for the orga zation in general, though I do know that there will ever be chance of our having a regio organization in this section.

C. May Over

I gather that Mr. DeVane's su gestion is intended largely to m the criticism of the Modern La guage Association people in reg to a duplication of program it seems to me that it ought t that very adequately. Moreover, am entirely in sympathy with t idea of making the regional me ings the discussion conferenc and I am glad to approve the pr gram as submitted.

Just for purposes of sociabi I might say, however, that the p vision for a "senate" strikes me being a little bit in the nature superorganization. I should pers ally prefer to have the chairm and secretary of the various r ions automatically the director the national organization, to fu tion at the annual meeting al the lines suggested.

Frank Prentice R

We Can't Come

We gladly grant that the East- Boston surely — is the proper c ter for the CEA this winter, we who live in the Middle W and Upper South just cannot there. What with Christmas, Red Cross, European calls, C Relief, and passing dividends, East is too far away. There i genuine need of a Middle West tion of the CEA to furnish all sible help to hundreds of four-y college teachers. Cannot th from the central and south states who come together at B ton in December have a brief ganization meeting for the a purpose?

E. J. Week
Berea Colle

What Is Meant By Criticism?

Before I could make any comment on the statement that "the fine art of Criticism" is something that cannot be taught to undergraduates, I should have to know what the writer means by Criticism. A good deal of what passes for criticism seems to me dull and even futile because instead of revealing more clearly the work under discussion it gets between me and it. Such criticism substitutes opinions, facts of research, or what have you, for clear perception of the author's purpose and excited appreciation of his methods and results. I do not accept the implication that there are "cannons of criticism," any more than there are cannons of creation. If I may be pardoned the levity, it was the cannons of criticism which were trained on poor Keats. A good critic is a creator in his own right, and in the act of appreciation and appraisal of a work of art will find, each time, the method whereby he brings to us the richness of his experience. If he cannot communicate that, he is not really a critic. Shall we call him a scholar, and let it go?

If it is possible to teach a few undergraduates how to be creative writers, then it should be possible to teach a few how to write criticism, at least such impressionistic criticism as depends on good taste in reading and skill in expression, and does not call for the handling of a mass of background material. The complete lack of any of the flavor of the original work in so many criticisms comes sometimes, one feels too sure, from inability to express it, to render it back in another medium. The critic is a bad writer. If an undergraduate, naturally gifted of course, can be taught to write and encouraged to trust and respect his own literary enthusiasms, I suspect he can be set on the way to contribute something positive and valuable to the appreciation of literature in his own generation.

But maybe this isn't criticism. I wouldn't know.

Walter Prichard Eaton.

—o—

Descriptive criticism—I have also heard it called scientific—consists of an accurate and understanding account of what a piece of writing is. As good examples as any known to me are the analyses by Richard Green Moulton of various parts of the Bible. His printings of the Psalms, showing their varying structures, are really illuminating, even if, perhaps, their authors never thought of them in just that way. Such criticism does not pronounce on the goodness or badness of its subject; it only describes. The comments, unless really illuminating are apt to be dull, but their soundness at least can be evaluated, and they do take serious study.

The other form is comparative criticism of two or more similar pieces. Poems, stories, plays, separate scenes on like subjects or situations give the best chance. If one of the pieces from demonstratable reasons is not so good as the other so much the better. It may very usefully be really bad. Precise consideration of the Middleton and Shakespeare witch scenes in *Macbeth*, Rossetti's sonnets 11 and 53 in *The House of Life*, or the additions to *The Spanish Tragedy* and passages of the original, are a few examples. These are real compositions, not artificially adulterated like some Poetry tests, but definitely say which is better and why.

Impressionistic undergraduate criticism is usually of little consequence as criticism, but may show up a good deal about the critic.

At the University of Colorado our classes in the history of the Drama write criticisms of the student productions. They soon learn that personal preferences count for little; what one dislikes another praises. Generally speaking when the students criticise adversely on more than personal prejudices, their judgments are sound: the reasons may be poorly stated but they are usually essentially true. The main advantage of criticism in these circumstances is that it enforces the fact that since plays are works intended for production before an audience, the various contributing elements—play, actors, staging,—have to be considered and the audience response explained. Descriptive criticism arises naturally from such presentations, and when our programs are of one act plays, as they often are, comparisons are then inevitable and really significant.

George F. Reynolds,
Univ. of Colorado.

—o—

Culture and Criticism

Criticism, like many good things in life, comes not directly but as a by-product of other things. In this sense, perhaps, objective criticism cannot be taught, at least to fairly immature minds. Basicly, criticism is a culture of the mind, deepening appreciation, quickening the perception of beauty, and forming a critical faculty. In part at least, an instructor may hope to achieve some measure of success.

Accounting for wide differences, culture and criticism evolve eventually a stability of appreciation and agreement. Finer perception of beauty in words, breadth of sympathies, acuteness and sensitiveness become the author or critic. If we may assume that the student has an average faculty of intuitive perception, that he is endowed with the simple rudiments of appreciation, it is certainly within the province of a teacher to cultivate these rudiments. Reactions to books are within reach of those who for culture seek literary paths. In fact, when one approaches literature, he is not far from the fountain head of critical activity.

While instructive activities cannot be taught directly, training in critical interpretation leads to higher literary and spiritual culture. We can justify our attempt if we do little more than stimulate the growth of an aesthetic sense, a more intelligent study of literature, and a deeper reflection of life.

Myron McCurry,
Franklin College.

A Course in Criticism

I think a course in criticism is distinctly desirable for undergraduates. I have given such a course for thirty years. But the object of the work is not to make writers of criticism. It is rather to present to college students some understanding of the nature of literature as a human activity, and the functions of that activity in the development of the individual and of the race. Standards for the evaluation of literature and for methods of teaching literature must rest upon a clear understanding of literature as a means of organizing and evaluating experience. The absence of a general understanding of this function of literature, and of this kind of study of criticism in much of the graduate work in English forty years ago, has been the reason for the notable failure in the teaching of literature in the schools since.

It is still a question whether the desired analysis can best be made in a special undergraduate course in criticism, or as a part of all courses in literature. At present, we have a compromise organization. We begin the presentation in the freshman classes, continue it in a number of advanced classes, then try to give some unity to the attitude in a special class for seniors.

V. C. Coulter,
Univ. of Wyoming.

—o—

The Unprogressiveness of Progressive Education

(Continued from page 1)

stultifying educational theory prevents him from doing so. The student does not know the riches are there and must be shown before he can desire them. That "showing" is education in literature; it requires skillful teachers; it requires favorable conditions; as things are it requires group instruction, and that may necessitate the classification of students by literary ability, admittedly a difficult administrative practice. But instead of setting themselves to provide those conditions and those teachers, educational authorities proclaim that there are no riches there.

We were told by our speaker that anything written is literature and that what the students want to read is what they should be encouraged to read. Either books have no real power and we are wasting our time in making a fuss about them or such a doctrine is vicious. Some books are narcotics; some are poisonous—not merely evil books, but books which pretending to tell the truth about life, give a distorted idea of it; both kinds are now being freely circulated, even advised, by school libraries. Some books, on the other hand, and there are such books for every intellectual age, give something of unique value to life, intellectual vitamins, to be got nowhere else. Those books are among the so-called classics, which means only that they have proved their worth. Some are old, some are contemporary; some are easy, some are difficult, but worth working at. Does the "new" education refuse to work at literature at all, to encourage only lollipops? What a diet!

Why must our educational theories always be ridden to such lengths that they become absurd and pernicious? Of course the student's capacities and tastes must be considered; of course we must begin where he is. I am not saying all students must read the same books, though there are a few to which I think all should at some time in their education be at least exposed, for the sake of the student himself and a common national culture. But to deny that some books are more valuable than others, and to refuse to arrange our educational program and machinery so that these valuable books are made to yield to him what they have to offer is simply to take an easy way out of a difficulty, to deny to real teachers a chance to do the job they are capable of, and to rob the student of his birthright. We have come a long way since Ruskin's allegory of the lackeys at the door of letters and the kings waiting within to talk to us if we will go in. Nowadays we are told the lackeys are as great as the kings and their gossip just as good as the words of the wise. This is democracy gone mad.

So far this attitude in education is mainly a problem for secondary schools, but already the colleges are meeting it in a lack among Freshmen of any bases of common training, in bright students who might have read real books but who have been fed on twaddle, and in students who resent being asked to read anything that does not interest them at the first inspection. If things go on as they have begun education in literature will have to start with Freshmen. As a matter of fact that is in many cases already true.

George F. Reynolds,
Univ. of Colorado.

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Thank You

This is merely a note to tell you how much I have enjoyed the November number of *The News Letter*. I have read it from page one to page six, inclusive.

I particularly enjoyed its newsy, chatty informality. To one who has taught in ungraded, high school, and college work — three denominational colleges and one state teacher's college located in three different states — it is interesting to discover methods, new and old, used by teachers in various parts of our nation. All this makes the ambitious teacher realize that the method must fit the subject and the student; otherwise, the teacher is a David trying to fight in a Saul's armor.

The extra sheet and the noticeable variety in offerings added to my personal pleasure. There is certainly a big place for this Association and its wideawake *News Letter*. Keep up the good work.

Yours for better English,
I. C. Keller,
State Teachers College,
California, Penn.

—o—

A report of the November meeting of the "Middle Atlantic Section" of CEA, held at George Washington University arrived too late for publication in this issue. Buy the January *News Letter* (adv.)

An Introductory Course To Literature

The survey-course in English seems to be founded on the pious hope that students who up to now have sailed the seas by dead reckoning should suddenly by some kind of academic presto-change find themselves able to shoot the sun and plot their position. This hope is kept alive by several circumstances. In the first place there is always a handful of students in every class whose alertness is mistaken for critical maturity; in the second place teachers have a horror of "squeezing the life" out of literature by a training in critical techniques. They have a pet reply: "As Wordsworth said, 'We murder to dissect'." May I suggest that there are dissections and dissections. There are those whose brutality and clumsiness destroy the life under their hands; there are those also which cut away dead tissue, or which reveal the delicate devices which give life active meaning.

It has never been quite clear in my mind why the understanding of literature, which is a skill of a highly ordered kind, should not begin, as other skills are obliged to begin, with the artisan's mastery of keen-edged tools. By this I mean, to be specific, an intensive training in the basic conceptions which give literature its power as an art. I have in mind an introductory course which would follow the deductive rather than the inductive method, which would acquaint the student with first principles. In this course I would include first an analysis of the kind of participation the intelligent reader gives, and the illumination literature affords through its characteristic medium of words. I would also include discussion of communication, subsidiary and integral form, logical analysis, imaginative response, persuasion, the various approaches to literary study (historical, sociologican, ethical, etc.), and the author's concept of society. All of these topics would be studied in conjunction with illustrative texts chosen for their suitability from any author and period.

It would not be an easy course to teach. Perhaps it would not be an easy one to take. It would offer the student, however, the opportunity to come to grips with the issues which underlie any satisfaction in literature. It would give him close training in the art of criticism, and would furnish him with points of reference which would be invaluable not only in any subsequent course in literature but also in the task of intelligent living.

Nathan Comfort Starr,
Chapel Hill,
North Carolina.

—o—

The Art of Emphasis

Dear Editor:

Neither wild horses nor a ten-ton caterpillar tank could pull a magazine article or commentary from me in the present hour.

Faithfully yours,
Carl Sandburg

Contributors to the "News Letter"

Vol. I No. 1

A. D. Compton, College of City of New York.
Dudley Wynn, University of New Mexico.
C. C. Certain, Wayne University.
F. W. Sypher, Simmons College.
Henry C. F. Staunton, Notre Dame.
R. M. Gay, Simmons College.

Vol. I No. 2

Robert M. Gay, Simmons College.
Arthur Yates, Long Island Univ.
Eric Knight.
Henry S. Canby.
Frank Aydelotte, Swarthmore.
Richard M. Kain, Ohio Wesleyan.
Harlan W. Hamilton, University of Akron.

Vol. I No. 3

Willa Cather.
Donald F. Connors, Fordham University.
Clayton Hamilton.
Robert Gay, Simmons College.
Douglas Bement, George Washington University.
Lawrence G. Panter, Mississippi State.
T. M. Pearce, University of New Mexico.
Bertrand M. Wainger, Union College.
C. C. Certain, Wayne University.
John Erskine.
F. Cudworth Flint, Dartmouth.
Henry N. MacCracken, Vassar.

Vol. II No. 1

John Holmes, Tufts College.
Christopher Morley.
Ray Stannard Baker.
George Ade.
Herbert E. Childs, Oregon State.
Joseph Hergesheimer.
Robert M. Gay, Simmons College.
Mary H. Perkins, University of Oregon.
A. V. Hall, University of Washington.
Charles W. Roberts, University of Ill nois.
D. S. Mead, Pennsylvania State College.
Roy P. Basler, State Teachers College (Alabama).
Newman B. Birk, Tufts College.
Henry M. Wriston, Brown University.

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John Holmes, Tufts College.
Ernest M. Ligon, Union College.
Norman Foerster, State University of Iowa.
Rupert Hughes.
Cleanth Brooks, Louisiana State.
Charles W. Roberts, University of Illinois.

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Thomas M. H. Blair, Kent State University.
H. L. Mencken.
John Holmes, Tufts College.
J. Gordon Eaker, Kansas State Teachers College.
Ellsworth Barnard, Williams College.
Robert E. Spiller, Swarthmore.
William D. Templeman, University of Illinois.

Vol. II No. 4

Edith R. Mirrielees, Stanford Univ.
F. Wylie Sypher, Simmons College.
H. O. Werner, Bethany College.
John Abbot Clark, Michigan State.
Theodore Morrison, Harvard University.
Wilson O. Clough, University of Wyoming.

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William C. DeVane, Yale Universty.
F. Wylie Sypher, Simmons College.
Edith R. Mirrielees, Stanford University.
Arthur Guiterman.
A. E. Johnson, Syracuse University.
Jeremiah K. Durick, St. Michael's College.
John Hawley Roberts, Williams College.
Robert M. Gay, Simmons College.
Walter Pritchard Eaton, Yale University.
Eric V. Sandin, State Teachers College (Minn.)
D. S. Mead, Pennsylvania State.
William S. Ament, Scripps College.
I. A. Richards, Harvard University.
Francis P. Donnelly, Fordham University.
Milton Ellis, Universty of Maine.
W. L. Werner, Pennsylvania State.
Maurice Hicklin, Humboldt State College.
Hugh McCarron, Loyola College.

Vol. II No. 6

August H. Mason, University of Alabama.
J. B. Douds, Albright College.
Robert Warnock, University of Connecticut.
L. I. Redmond.
Wm. C. DeVane, Yale.
S. Stephenson Smith.
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An Administrative Opinion

The problem of dealing more effectively with college instruction in the field of English composition is one that has interested me deeply for a long time. I question whether there is any part of collegiate education which is more deserving of attention. Of course it is not a problem that belongs solely to the departments of English or of English and public speaking. Under analysis it is not difficult to discover that what is involved is very much the whole process of learning, which necessarily comes to the surface principally in the form of an increasing ability to put ideas together logically and cogently in the verbal symbols of the mother tongue. If we could get all our college teachers to see the nature of the problem and its profound educational importance, we doubtless could make headway much more rapidly than we have been doing. Meanwhile, as you imply, the aims of scholarship as conceived commonly in university circles look in quite a different direction and greatly complicate the task of getting college students to express themselves simply and clearly and effectively in both written and oral forms. It seems to me that the whole subject is tremendously important.

Edmund E. Day,
President, Cornell University.

College English

The reason which students use in writing examinations in non-English courses is a cause of continual friction in college faculties. Instructors in other departments say the fault lies with the English department. The English teachers reply that they cannot be held responsible for the esoteric "telegramese" which many of their colleagues condone or even seem to encourage. Last year Harvard's committee on the use of English by students, which is valiantly struggling to resolve this ancient argument, made a study of the History mid-year examination. Its conclusion was that "the English revealed by these sample papers seems on the whole unworthy of Harvard freshmen and sophomores."

From the many specimens reproduced in the committee's report, we select one for quotation here, not because it is extraordinarily or humorously bad, but because it is typical of the careless, formless, and insensitive sort of writing in which so many allegedly college-educated persons indulge:

When Hugh Capet was elected King of Fr 987 it was really a reaction ag. any kind of a strong central authority for Capet's lands were very small and not powerful. Yet Fr was at this not really divided up as far a people were concerned—that is by their heritage — although there was & still is a difference bet. the no. & so. Frenchmen, but rather divided feudally. Unfortunately when Conrad II came in at the latter ½ of the 10th cent. as king of Ger. he was elected by Dukes ruling over duchies separated by tribal heritages and differences with no bond at all between them —no even the feudal bond.

Aside from the "barbarous abbreviations" and other specific defects, the writing is reprehensible because it violates the first essential of writing, intelligibility. Certainly no one would read it for pleasure, and even the examination reader probably had difficulty in ascertaining its accuracy as history. Writing is a means of communication—a medium for the telling of a story, the explanation of an idea, the expression of an emotion, etc. — and unless the writer keeps constantly in mind the probable effect of his work on the reader, he is likely to slip into constructions which, by their obscurity or awkwardness, repel the reader rather than attract him.

Good English teaching is usually a personal relationship. The superior teacher must have an enthusiasm for the written word as an agency of human intercourse which will enable him to awaken a similar affection in students. He must also have an aptitude for imparting information. Not all teachers, not all great scholars, possess those talents. But Harvard's decision to include next year in the teaching staff of English A, its required English course for freshmen, five young writers of demonstrated ability promises the introduction of a larger amount of that elusive, personal quality than is now available in Cambridge.

Appropriately and significantly, the new instructorships are named for two great Harvard teachers, LeBaron Russell Briggs and Charles Townsend Copeland, whose influence for lively, intelligible English spread far beyond their classrooms.

—The Boston Herald.

Virginia and Her Neighbors

A last minute announcement in the November "News Letter" of the formation of a new regional group of CEA members called for this supplementary statement.

A first meeting of members of CEA from Virginia, West Virginia, and North Carolina was held at the John Marshall Hotel in Richmond on Saturday, October 26. There are 31 recorded members of CEA in that area, and 25 attended the meeting.

H. K. Russell of the University of North Carolina presided at the first session. Dean Grace Landrum read a paper entitled "A Freshman's Reading: the Lost Decades." "My basis of observation," she reports, "was a study of hundreds of admission letters submitted to the College of William and Mary in the spring of 1940. These letters contained lists of students' voluntary reading for the last two years. My thesis is that students in college, unless they are concentrating in English, fail to remain as good readers as they seem to have been, rather surprisingly, at entrance. In the freshman year real effort should be made to direct a freshman, to lead him into the thought of reading, as an essential pleasure. By the 'Lost Decades' I refer to the closing years of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of our own.

In this area students seldom travel. They need to be acquainted with pleasurable reading, especially of fiction. It would escape them entirely but for guidance. By way of illustration, I mentioned the novels of Kipling, Stevenson, and Conrad, and in American literature, Thomas Nelson Page and Howells. Without encouragement and emphasis on voluntary reading, the average college graduate, except the major in language, may in later years be exactly like his non-college associates in his absorption in contemporary material and often that of the poorer, or even poorest, sort."

A lively discussion followed.

Col. R. E. Dixon of Virginia Military Institute then spoke on "Teachers and Democratic Ideals." He maintained that in the present disordered state of the world it behooves the teachers of English to emphasize particularly two principles prominent in this country from its founding: 1. individualism and personal liberty, 2. international morality and proper moral standards for the individual. The teachers can accomplish these ends in large measure by a change of emphasis in the courses taught. Some of the material usually studied may be omitted or be given less attention in order that other things that emphasize these principles may be included or be treated more at length. This, he said, means adopting the method of the training table. Now that the student is to be taught more than ever to see the paramount issues of the day and to think clearly about them, he needs a somewhat different diet.

After an informal half-hour, a luncheon, over which J. L. Vaughan of the University of Virginia presided, was served for members and their guests. In the afternoon R. H. Scofield of the Department of English of St. John's College, Annapolis, submitted to the meeting, as its guest speaker, a very keen analysis of the purpose and progress of the St. John's plan of education. The considerable, indeed emphatic discussion aroused was cut short only by the need of our group to effect an organization before adjournment.

It was agreed that the three states, North Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia should form a sectional or regional branch of the CEA. An assessment of one dollar in annual dues for this group was voted. The following officers were chosen: J. D. Bennett, Sweet Briar College, President; H. K. Russell, University of North Carolina, Vice President; Caroline S. Lutz, Westhampton College, University of Richmond, Secretary and Treasurer. Another meeting was planned for the spring.

J. D. Bennett.

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Report from the School and College Conference on English

"The English classroom has become the repository of everything remotely connected with language. In a highly verbal society this means that there is scarcely any chance activity that is not considered fit provender for an English course. Telephoning, radio, moving pictures, table manners — all these and many similar performances are threatening to become major concerns of teachers of English."

In terms usually less sensational than these used to picture the danger of disintegration of English studies, the School and College Conference on English presents a pamphlet[1] to "buoy up the confidence and independence of the competent teacher." This report of the Language Committee of the Conference has been two years in the making, under the direction of Louis C. Zahner of Groton School, Chairman.

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The executive Committee of the School and College Conference on English decided in the spring of 1939 to devote three or more years to a comprehensive study of the teaching of English in secondary schools. Of the two proposed divisions, Language and Literature, the Language Committee was first to be formed. Besides Mr. Zahner, the Committee, whose report is now available, consisted of Margaret Ball, Mount Holyoke College; Ruth P. Chandler, St. Margaret's School; Frances D. Dugan, The Winson School; Theodore Morrison, Harvard University; Agnes F. Perkins, Wellesley College; Arthur B. Perry, Milton Academy; and Arthur S. Roberts, St. George's School. The preliminary report of the Committee was the subject of the annual meeting of the School and College Conference on English held in New York in February 1940. Here, after considerable discussion from the floor, the contents of the present pamphlet were approved by the representatives of the member schools and colleges.

Intending no revolutionary doctrine, the Committee declares its purpose is to give to the term *power*, as a long accepted objective in teaching, a definition in relation to the study of language in English classes, particularly in college preparatory work.

Both literary and non-literary materials for study in English classes are valuable in developing increased ability and desire to read and increased power to write and reason. The committee recommends analytical reading for fuller recognition of the meaning of words and statements, analogy and metaphor. Placing emphasis upon close reading in the classroom combined with wide outside reading and upon the importance of expository writing, the report sets as objectives honest dealing with facts and considered expression of opinion. Against premature attempts at literary criticism, the authors warn: "To expect secondary schools to steer a controlled course through the intricacies of criticism is beyond nature." The writing of *source themes* as long as fifteen hundred to two thousand words is "probably best postponed until the first year of college." Emphasis in secondary school should be placed on frequent short expository themes.

This stress upon the need for training in expository writing does not imply disapproval of so-called *Creative* writing. Nevertheless, the therapeutic or psychological value for the pupil of personal expression in verse, narrative, drama, and essay is thought by the committee not a direct aim of education. The value of creative writing in educational development is as much in form, design, order, intellectual coherence as in expressiveness.

This carefully prepared and thoughtful report will do much to encourage the teacher who is already aware of the complexity, both in aim and method, which confronts secondary school English today. It will undoubtedly prove to be a valuable check against his own practice as well as to provide him with a point of view in shaping his course. Certainly he will find useful the organized and annotated bibliography, for which the Language Committee thanks Professor Alice D. Snyder of Vassar College.

Catharine Meyer,
Vassar College.

1. *School and College Conference on English. Report of the Language Committee*, April, 1940. (Copies may be obtained from *Douglas A. Shepardson, The Choate School*, Secretary-Treasurer of the School and College Conference: twenty-five cents the single copy up to five; six or more copies at twenty cents per copy.)

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"Grammar"

"I have been associated with grammarians all of my professional life, and have toiled as hard as most men over the grammar of many languages. But a certain skepticism about the ultimate value of this labor was implanted in me, innocently enough, by my father. He had been chairman of the School Committee one year when I was in the graded school on Spring Street, and among his whimsicalities was an ancient grudge against the conventional teaching of English grammar. His own mother, he was wont to remark, had once lost a 'parsing match' because she refused to try to parse the phrase 'That yew-tree's shade' in Gray's *Elegy*. She declared that she could parse it well enough if she had ever seen a yew-tree! Father always defended her position, with roars of laughter at all pedants. It happened that during his term on the School Committee, my class had a grammar lesson every morning at nine. He excused me from attendance, with this injunction: 'My boy, put in all the time you can on Latin and Greek grammar, for those are inflected languages; but forget that there is such a thing as English grammar.' The result was, that not having to report at school until ten o'clock, I added greatly to my already excellent collection of birds' eggs, and am absurdly ignorant of the formal rules of English grammar to this day."

—from "And Gladly Teach"
by Bliss Perry.

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